



Columbia River Water Resource Management Program

OBJECTIVES

Create a water-management program for the Columbia River that:

Invests in storage, conservation and improved water management practices on the Columbia River.

Distributes water to both out-of-stream and in-stream needs, getting it to the right place at the right time.

Allows for creativity and flexibility in achieving water resource solutions through regional agreements.

Sustains growing communities and a healthy economy, and meets the needs of fish and healthy watersheds.

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WHY ACTION IS NECESSARY NOW

Competition for water continues to escalate. There are hundreds of pending applications in Washington for new water rights from the Columbia, and there is little agreement on the stream flows needed to support salmon. Historically water policy on the Columbia River has been driven by litigation, only to result in additional gridlock. The Columbia River Water Resource Management Program will allow access to the river's water resources while providing adequate protection for endangered salmon and other species.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Gathering Ideas and Comments

Building on the *Columbia River Initiative*, Gov. Gregoire empanelled a legislative Task Force to work with affected parties to explore creative solutions on the Columbia River. Legislators and stakeholders met over the last year to develop an outline of the water management program for the 2006 legislative session. The effort included outreach to tribal governments, county commissioners, public utility and irrigation districts, and the environmental community.

Science and Economic Reviews

The state secured a formal and independent review of the science of fish survival and hydrology in the Columbia River by the National Academy of Sciences. The study underscored the need for careful management of water on the Columbia, particularly during the months of July and August. A separate economic review developed by the University of Washington highlighted the relationship between water use and economic productivity in Eastern Washington.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS

Immediately following the enactment of the new law Ecology will begin to pursue new water resources in Eastern Washington. These efforts will include:

- Developing an alternative feed route for the Potholes Reservoir
- Making modifications to Pinto Dam
- Developing water conveyance facilities to the Odessa Subarea
- Providing mitigation for the drawdown of Lake Roosevelt under the Agreement in Principle with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Completing Appraisal and Feasibility reviews of storage sites identified by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Initiating conservation projects identified in cooperation with the Washington Conservation Commission and other local partners

LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

- Study and development of new storage on the mainstem Columbia River in a manner that provides water resources of out-of-stream use while resulting in benefits to endangered species.
- Study and implementation of improved water management operations of facilities on the Columbia River
- Ongoing pursuit of water conservation projects
- Other efforts designed to reduce barriers to efficient allocation and marketing of scarce water resources.